

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 0525

FOL MSG FROM SONGKHLA SENT ACTION BANGKOK 7 JAN IS REPEATED
TO YOU FOR ACTION

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SONGKHLA 003

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: RTG SUPPRESSION IN THE SOUTH

SUMMARY: RTG IS NOW WELL LAUNCHED ON MAJOR SUPPRESSION CAMPAIGN
IN SOUTHERN PROVINCES. TO DATE CAMPAIGN HAS RELIED HEAVILY ON
AIR STRIKES WITH MINIMAL FOLLOW UP BY GROUND FORCES. HAZANIC
CHORUS FROM SOUTHERN GOVERNORS PRAISING OPERATION IS NOT ECHOED
BY LOCAL RESIDENTS WHO REMAIN SKEPTICAL ABOUT LONG TERM IMPACT
OF OPERATION. END SUMMARY

1. MUCH HERALDED SUPPRESSION OPERATION IN SOUTHERN PROVINCES IS
NOW IN FULL SWING. AIR STRIKES HAVE BEEN MADE IN SATUN, PHATTALUNG
AND SONGKHLA AS WELL AS IN NAKORN SRI THAMMARAT AND SURAT FURTHER
NORTH. PRESS ACCOUNTS REPORT 30 INSURGENTS KILLED IN AIR STRIKES
THUS FAR. RTA SOURCE SAID JANUARY 6 EIGHT MORE WERE KILLED BY
STRIKES IN SATUN. PLANS TO MOVE VILLAGERS OUT OF THE BAN THAD
MOUNTAIN RANGE WHICH STRETCHES THROUGH EIGHT PROVINCES IN THE
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SOUTH INDICATE MORE BOMBING IS PLANNED.

2. THIS FLURRY OF ACTIVITY HAS DEMONSTRATED RTG CONCERN OVER
SITUATION IN THE SOUTH AND ACCOUNTS IN PART FOR HIGHLY OPTIMISTIC
STATEMENTS BY GOVERNORS IN SONGKHLA, PHATTALUNG, AND SATUN TO EFFECT
THAT RTG NOW HAS THE INSURGENTS ON THE RUN. RTG STAYING POWER
REMAINS TO BE SEEN. LOCAL RESIDENTS HAVE SEEN IMPRESSIVE RTG

SUPPRESSION CAMPAIGNS FIZZLE OUT BEFORE AND ARE NOT YET PREPARED TO SAY THIS ONE WILL BE ANY DIFFERENT. MOREOVER, IF NOT CAREFULLY CONTROLLED, EXTENSIVE BOMBING AND FORCED RE-SETTLEMENT OF VILLAGERS WOULD EVEN CREATE MORE CT SUPPORTERS. LONG TERM IMPACT OF THE OPERATION THUS NOT APT TO BE CLEAR UNTIL INSURGENTS ATTEMPT TO RE-GROUP.

3. IN SADAO DISTRICT OF SONGKHLA WHERE SOME OF THE HEAVIEST BOMBING HAS TAKEN PLACE, RESIDENTS WERE PARTICULARLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT EFFICACY OF MILITARY OPERATIONS. CONSULATE POLITICAL ASSISTANT TALKED WITH CROSS-SECTION OF MERCHANTS AND MIDDLE LEVEL OFFICIALS JAN 6. MOST FELT THAT AFTER BOMBING STOPPED AND RTG TROOPS MOVED ON INSURGENTS WOULD REMAIN IN CONTROL OF VAST AREAS OF SADAO.

4. INTERESTING WRINKLE WAS FEELING OF SEVERAL RUBBER PLANTATION OWNERS IN SADAO WHO OBJECTED TO OPERATIONS DIRECTED AGAINST COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYSIA (CPM). THEY SAID CPM PROVIDING ONLY EFFECTIVE PROTECTION AGAINST BANDITS (HE SAID UNIFORMED AND OTHERWISE MEANING THAI POLICE) IN THE AREA. PLANTATION OWNERS FELT RELATIVELY SMALL TAXES PAID TO CPM A GOOD INVESTMENT AND VIEWED RTG OPERATIONS AS IN EFFECT DISBURSING PLANTATION SECURITY FORCE. THEY WERE NOT MOVED BY ARGUMENT THAT COOPERATION WITH CPM HURT RTG EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH CONTROL.

5. SADAO DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF SAID THAT IN PAST TWO WEEKS HE HAD REPORTS FROM VILLAGERS THAT STUDENTS, WHO EARLIER JOINED CT, NOW WANTED TO ESCAPE. HE SAID IN MANY CASES STUDENTS WERE REPORTEDLY BEING HELD UNDER ARMED GUARD. POLICE CHIEF SAID THIS CONFIDENTIAL

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ALSO TRUE IN SATUN AND IN PALIAN DISTRICT OF TRANG WHERE INSURGENTS REPORTEDLY SHOT SEVERAL STUDENTS IN ACT OF ESCAPING. SUCH REPORTS COULD BE EXAGGERATED, BUT IT MAY BE THAT STUDENT DISENCHANTMENT WITH RIGORS OF JUNGLE LIFE IS BEING COMPOUNDED BY RECENT BOMBING RAIDS.

HAMILTON

UNQUOTE WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

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